GUIDE TO THE RG4 ESTONIANS FILE

[The RG4 Estonians file is concerned with those speakers of the Balto-Finnic branch of the Finno-Ugric language stock. This specifically includes the Estonians, the Livonians, Vepses, and Votes prior to Soviet rule. For data on the Baltic countries under Soviet rule, see the RB1 file. Sometime during the first centuries A.D., the ancestors of these peoples migrated from the vicinity of the Volga River to their present locations around the Baltic Sea. The Estonians, who numbered approximately 958,000 in 1973, were primarily Lutherans in religion. They were still primarily agriculturalists but the development of industry in the late nineteenth century drew many people to the cities. In 1939 55% of the population were engaged in agriculture while 24% were in industry. To the northeast of the Estonians lived the Votes and Vepsians. The Votes numbered only 600-700 in 1955, and due to their long association with Russians, had become almost completely Russified. They were completely Russian Orthodox in religion, and their only distinguishing feature was the Votic language. Although the Vepsians numbered 30,000-35,000 in 1955, they were even more Russified than the Votes. Both the Votes and the Vepsians were agricultural and the Vepses are described as the most "backward" of the Balto-Finnic people, still living in a "wooden age" after World War I. The Livionians lived in the Latvian SSR, and in 1949 they numbered about 1,000. Their 12 villages were on the coast of the Baltic Sea and their primary means of livelihood was fishing. Like the Estonians, the Livonians were Lutherans, but in most other respects were rapidly becoming Latvianized.

There are five sources in the RE4 file, plus miscellaneous pages from other files. Sources 1, 2, 3, and 4 on the

Estonians, Votes, Vepsians, and Livonians, respectively, are HRAF subcontractors monographs prepared by Indiana University. These monographs are general descriptive ethnographies which were prepared according to a prescribed outline and they cover most aspects of culture in a general way. Source 5: American Russian Institute is the text of the Constitution of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic as amended through 1947. The file is not recommended for comparative purposes. The Estonians, Livonians, Vepses, and Votes are considerably different from each other in numerous ways, and none of them is dealt with in any depth. The data in the file is however, good general information and would certainly be a good introduction to the Balto-Finnic cultures. The file was processed in 1955.]